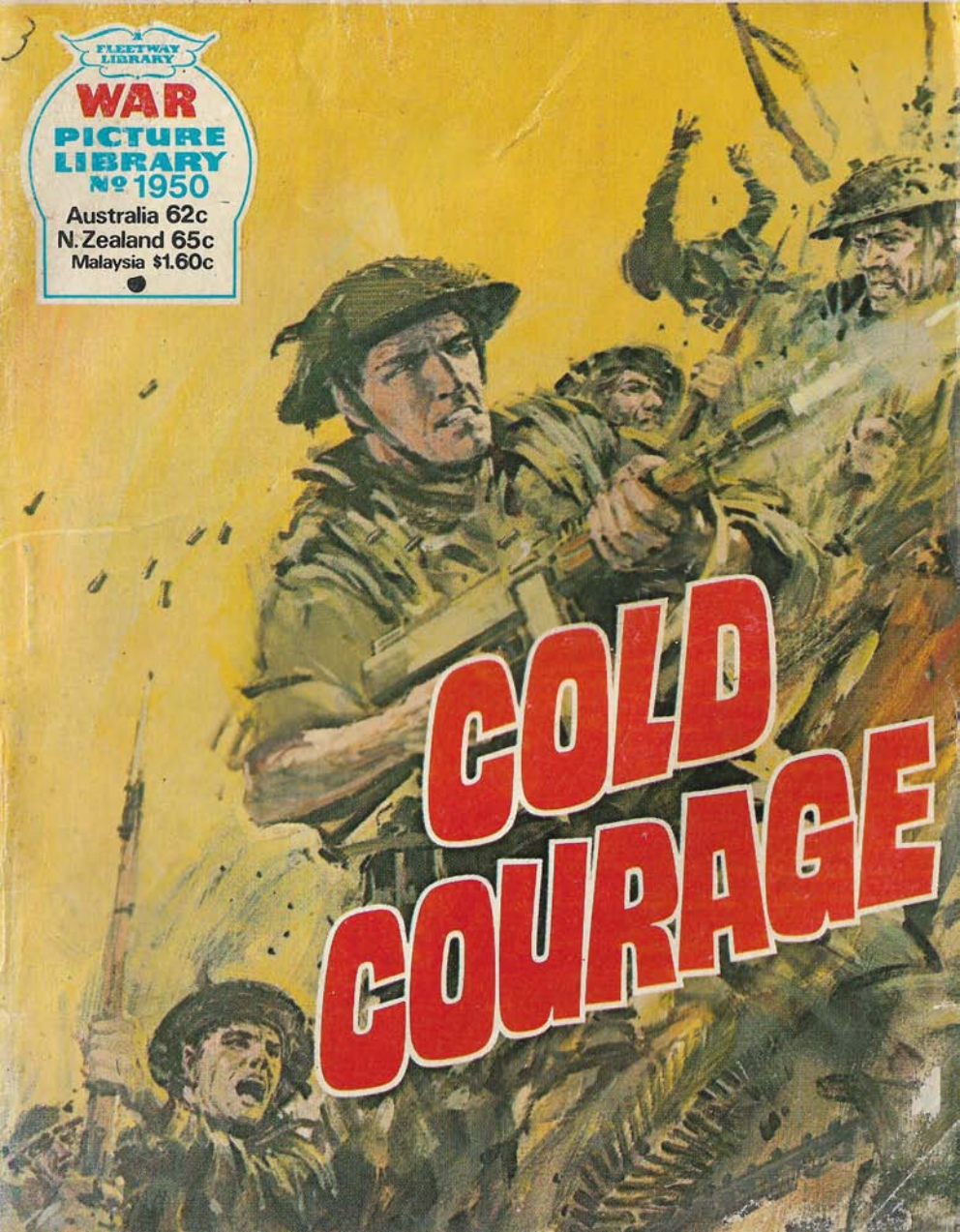


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# COLD COURAGE

# BIG VALUE HOLIDAY READING

THESE  
TWO  
GREAT  
LIBRARIES  
ARE ALSO  
ON SALE  
NOW !



EACH WITH  
192 PAGES  
PACKED  
WITH  
DRAMATIC  
BATTLE  
ACTION !

# COLD COURAGE



OF ALL THE BATTLES FOUGHT BY BRITISH AND ALLIED FORCES, NONE WAS MORE BITTER THAN THE NIGHTMARE STRUGGLE FOR MONTE CASSINO IN THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN.

## Chapter I. In Disgrace

IN THE SUMMER OF 1939, THE OUTBREAK OF WAR SEEMED INEVITABLE TO REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR BILL BAXTER, A REGULAR ARMY SOLDIER.



HE WAS FROWNING AS HE GOT UP AND BEGAN TO WIND THE CLOCK ON THE MANTELPIECE.



HIS SON, WALTER, SHOOK HIS HEAD.



TO BILL BAXTER THIS WAS SACRILEGE. THE ARMY WAS HIS LIFE. HIS FATHER HAD BEEN A SOLDIER, AND IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR BILL HAD JOINED UP UNDER AGE AND FOUGHT WITH DISTINCTION. HE GAVE A SNORT OF DISGUST.



AS HE LOOKED AT HIS SON'S BIG AND POWERFUL FRAME, ANGER, NEVER FAR FROM THE SURFACE IN R.S.M. BAXTER, ROSE IN HIM.



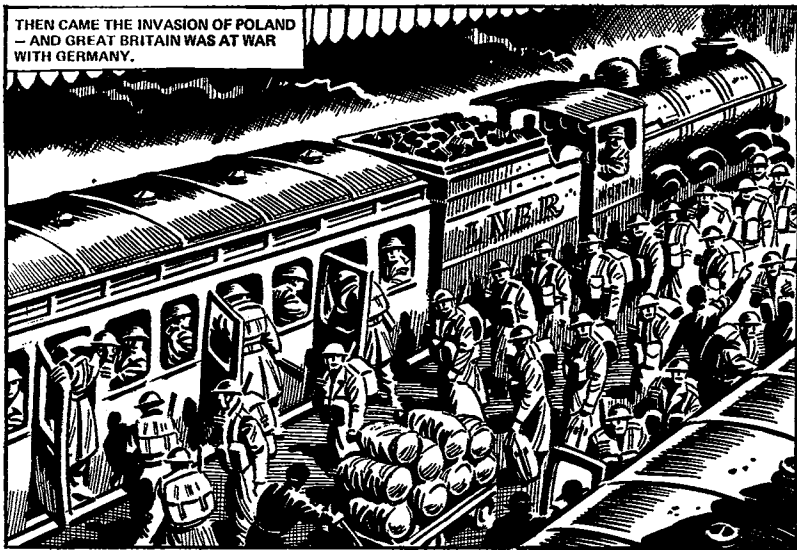
WALLY KEPT SILENT, BUT UNDER THE BITTER TAUNT HE WENT VERY WHITE.



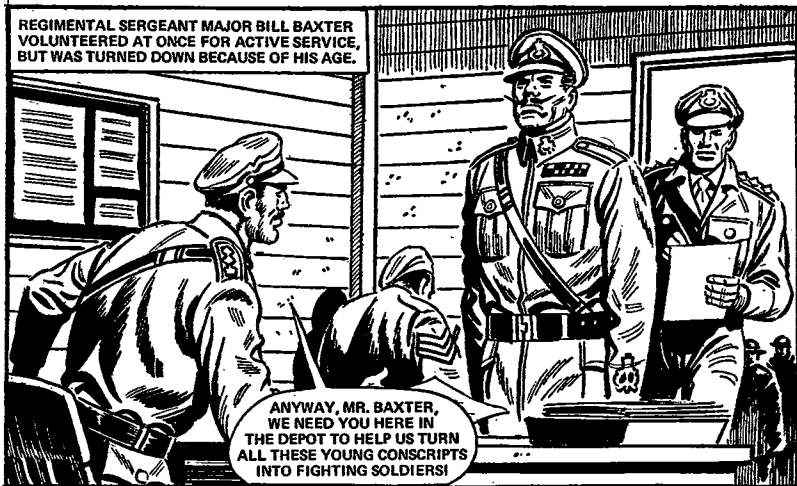
HE'LL BE CALLED UP SOON, ANYWAY, THEN HE'LL HAVE TO GO! THE ARMY WILL SOON SHOW HIM WHAT'S WHAT!



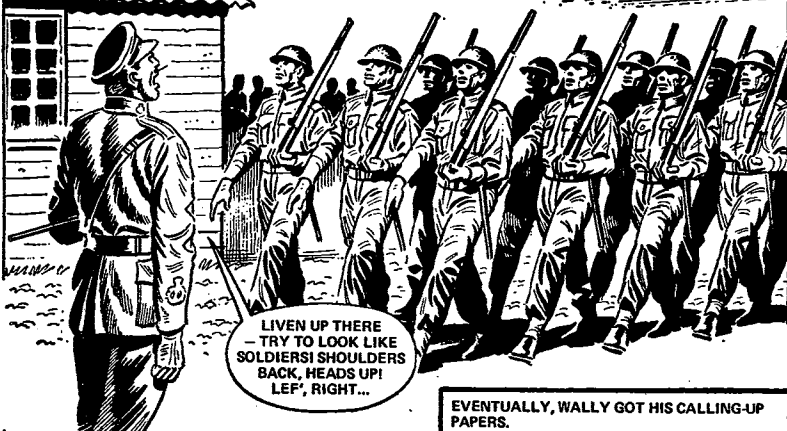
THEN CAME THE INVASION OF POLAND  
— AND GREAT BRITAIN WAS AT WAR  
WITH GERMANY.



REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR BILL BAXTER  
VOLUNTEERED AT ONCE FOR ACTIVE SERVICE,  
BUT WAS TURNED DOWN BECAUSE OF HIS AGE.



WITHIN A WEEK, THE R.S.M.'S BELLOW  
WAS ECHOING ACROSS THE PARADE  
GROUND OF THE REGIMENTAL DEPOT.



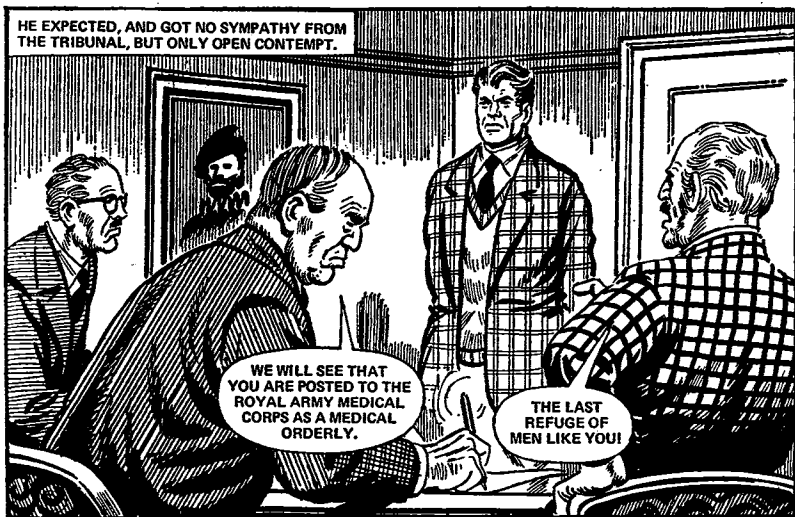
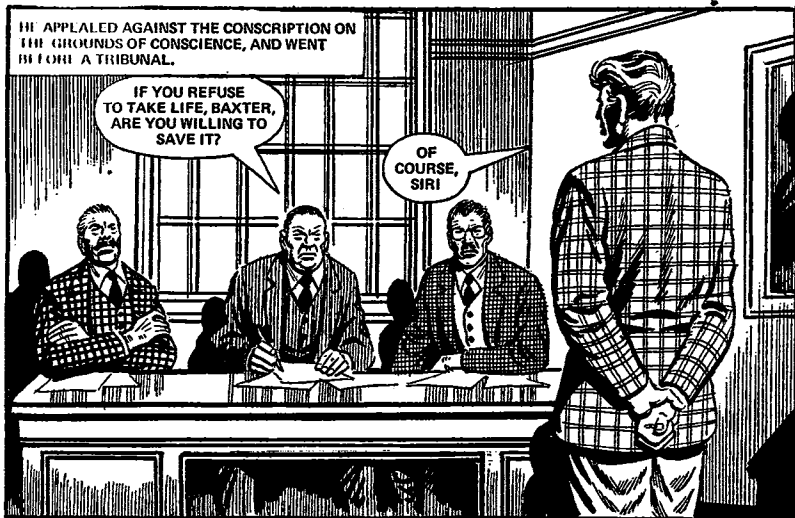
HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN A MARTINET, BUT NOW HE  
BECAME THE TERROR OF THE DEPOT...



EVENTUALLY, WALLY GOT HIS CALLING-UP  
PAPERS.







WHEN WALLY EMERGED ON TO THE STREET, A GANG OF NEW CONSCRIPTS WERE WAITING FOR HIM.



WALLY'S RESPONSE SURPRISED THEM, FOR HE PROMPTLY FLOORED THE BIGGEST LOU WITH A PILE-DRIVING PUNCH.





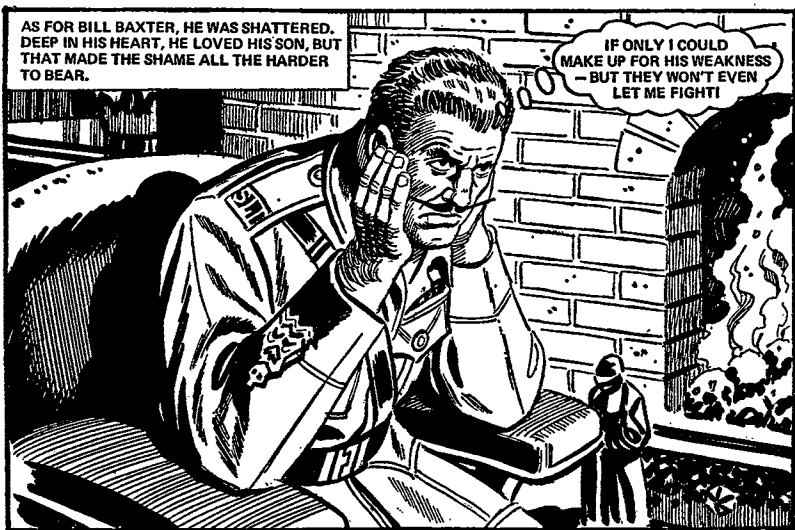
WITHOUT A WORD, WALLY WENT UPSTAIRS  
AND PUT A FEW CLOTHES IN A SUITCASE.  
THEN HE LEFT...

I'LL GO TO  
TED AND BETTY'S. THEY'VE  
ALWAYS BEEN GOOD FRIENDS,  
AND THEY'LL PUT ME UP  
UNTIL I HAVE TO REPORT  
TO THE R.A.M.C. DEPOT.

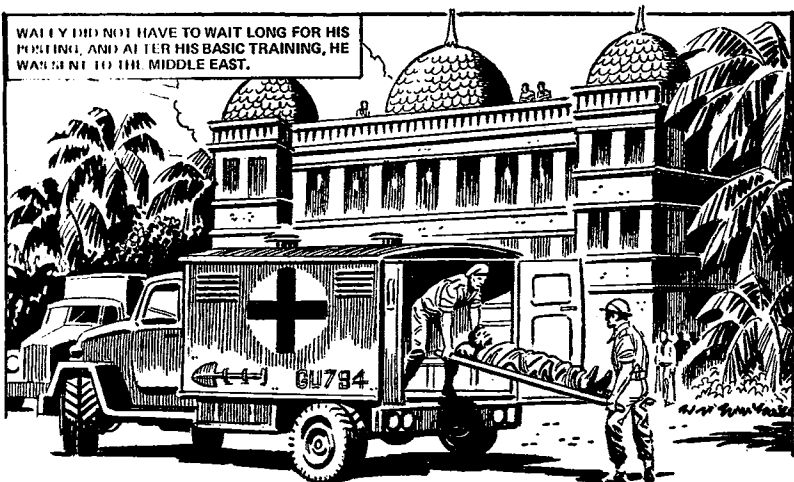


AS FOR BILL BAXTER, HE WAS SHATTERED.  
DEEP IN HIS HEART, HE LOVED HIS SON, BUT  
THAT MADE THE SHAME ALL THE HARDER  
TO BEAR.

IF ONLY I COULD  
MAKE UP FOR HIS WEAKNESS  
— BUT THEY WON'T EVEN  
LET ME FIGHT!



WALLY DID NOT HAVE TO WAIT LONG FOR HIS POSTING, AND AFTER HIS BASIC TRAINING, HE WAS SENT TO THE MIDDLE EAST.



THE MONTHS STRETCHED INTO YEARS. LIBYA, TUNIS, SICILY AND, EVENTUALLY, THE SALERNO LANDING IN ITALY. THERE HE WAS IN AN ADVANCED FIELD HOSPITAL AND CAME CLOSEST TO THE ACTUAL FIGHTING.



BUT ALL THIS TIME HE  
REMAINED A HUMBLE PRIVATE.

NO MATTER HOW  
WELL I DO, THEY WON'T  
GIVE ME ANY  
PROMOTION. I'M  
A CONCHIE!



MEANWHILE, R.S.M. BILL BAXTER HAD  
BECOME A LEGENDARY FIGURE, TONGUE-  
LASHING NERVOUS NEW RECRUITS AS HE  
TURNED THEM INTO FIGHTING MEN...

YOU'RE LIKE A  
BUNCH OF OLD GRANNIES!  
THE LAST ONE TO REACH THE  
FINISH LINE WILL BE ON  
FATIGUES - THE FIRST ONE  
GETS WEEKEND LEAVE!



HE AND WALLY EXCHANGED THE OCCASIONAL  
PORTCARDS, WITH THE BAREST INFORMATION  
ABOUT THEIR MOVEMENTS.



THEN CAME ONE OF THE HAPPIEST DAYS  
OF BILL BAXTER'S LIFE...



WHEN BILL BAXTER REACHED ITALY, THE BATTALION WAS OUT OF THE LINE, RESTING. THE COMMANDING OFFICER, COLONEL GLENN, GREETED HIM WARMLY.

VERY GLAD TO HAVE YOU WITH US, MISTER BAXTER. THERE'S NOT A MAN IN THE REGIMENT WHO HASN'T HEARD OF YOU.



THE FIRST THING BILL BAXTER DID WAS TO HAVE A TALK WITH THE WARRANT OFFICERS AND THE SERGEANTS.





SERGEANT JOE CANNING WAS ONE OF THOSE  
WHO INSISTED HIS TONE...



WE'VE SEEN  
ACTION, AND HE HASN'T!  
A DEPOT TYPE -- AND YET  
HE'S TELLING US HOW  
TO BE SOLDIERS!

BUT SERGEANT CHARLIE LOCK STUCK UP FOR  
THE NEW R.S.M.



HE MAY NOT HAVE  
BEEN IN ACTION IN THIS WAR,  
BUT HE SAW PLenty OF ACTION  
IN THE FIRST WAR, FOR PETE'S  
SAKE! HE GOT THE D.C.M. IN  
HIS TEENS, DIDN'T HE?

BUT CANNING WAS STILL UNIMPRESSED...



THEY CHUCKED MEDALS  
AROUND LIKE CONFETTI IN  
THOSE DAYS. BAXTER'S ALL  
MOUTH, IF YOU ASK ME.

## Chapter 2. Cassino

WHEN THE BATTALION MOVED UP TO THE CASSINO FRONT, THEY KNEW THAT IT WAS THE HOTTEST PART OF THE LINE AT THAT TIME.

THIS IS GOING TO SEPARATE THE MEN FROM THE BOYS, MISTER BAXTER.

YES, SIR - BUT I THINK NEARLY ALL OF THEM WILL TURN OUT TO BE MEN! THEY'RE A FINE BUNCH!

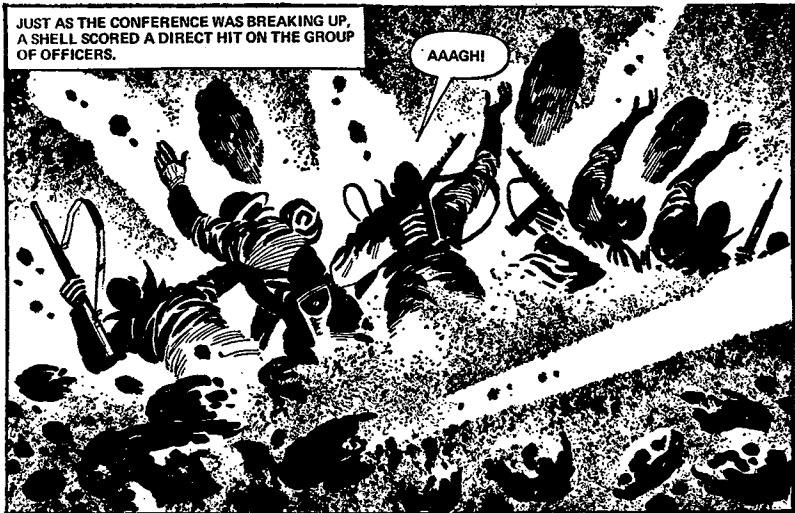
THAT NIGHT, 'B' COMPANY RELIEVED THE GURKHAS TO THE WEST OF MONASTERY HILL. THE FOLLOWING MORNING, THEY CAME UNDER HEAVY MORTAR AND SHELL-FIRE...

AAAGH-HI

CAPTAIN PAGE, COMMANDING 'B' COMPANY, HAD A HURRIED CONFERENCE WITH HIS PLATOON OFFICERS...



JUST AS THE CONFERENCE WAS BREAKING UP, A SHELL SCORED A DIRECT HIT ON THE GROUP OF OFFICERS.



R.S.M. BILL BAXTER, WHO HAD BEEN CLOSE BY, TOOK OVER AT ONCE. THE VOICE THAT HAD THUNDERED OVER SO MANY PARADE GROUNDS RANG OUT SO THAT EVERY MAN IN THE FIRING LINE HEARD IT...

LISTEN, LADS — CAPTAIN PAGE AND THE OFFICERS ARE CASUALTIES AND I'M TAKING COMMAND. WE'RE NOT STOPPING HERE TO BE SHOT TO PIECES — WE'RE GOING FORWARD — GET READY...



FOLLOW ME, LADSI

AN UNL MAN, THE COMPANY SURGED FORWARD  
AND AL THOUGH THEY CAME UNDER MACHINE  
GUN FIRE THEY GOT INTO DEAD GROUND WITH  
ONLY A FEW MEN HIT.



A FEW MORE YARDS, AND THEY WERE IN  
THE GULLY. SOME OF THE MEN FLUNG  
THEMSELVES DOWN TO GET A FEW MINUTES  
REST, BUT BILL BAXTER YELLED AT THEM...



NO REST YET.  
LADSI WE'VE GOT TO  
MAKE THIS A GOOD  
DEFENSIVE POSITION  
FIRST.

SERGEANT CANNING GRUMBLED BITTERLY...

A RIGHT  
BEAUTY WE'VE GOT  
FOR R.S.M. ONLY BEEN  
WITH US A FEW DAYS AND  
HE'S CHUCKING HIS  
WEIGHT ABOUT  
ALREADY.



THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE COLONEL PRAISED  
THE R.S.M.'S INITIATIVE.

FIRST-CLASS  
POSITION, MISTER  
BAXTER. HOW WOULD YOU  
LIKE A FIELD COMMISSION  
AND TAKE OVER THE  
COMPANY?



BILL BAXTER SHOOK HIS HEAD.



TWO DAYS LATER, THE C.O. ORDERED OUT A RECONNAISSANCE PATROL TO TRY TO LOCATE SOME OF THE CLEVERLY HIDDEN ENEMY MACHINE GUN POSTS. LEAVING SERGEANT CANNING IN TEMPORARY COMMAND OF THE COMPANY, BILL BAXTER LED THE PATROL HIMSELF.

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN CHARGE OF THAT PATROL, BUT THE R.S.M. WANTS ALL THE GLORY FOR HIMSELF!



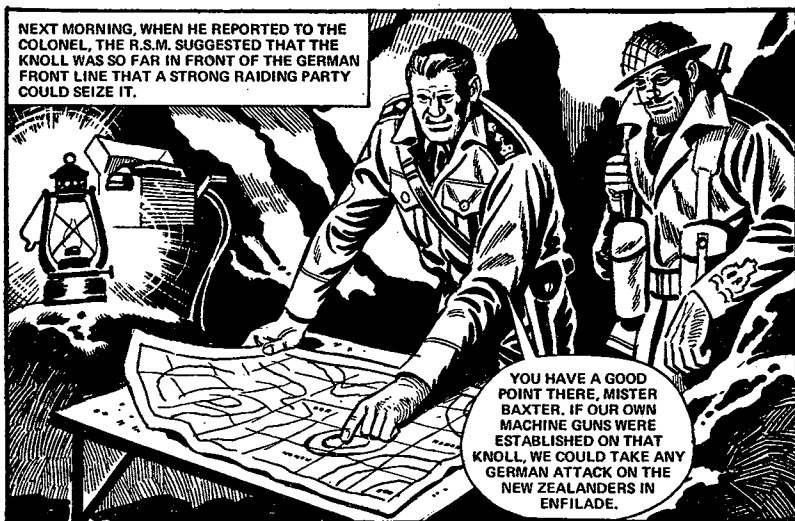
WITH THE SKILL OF A VETERAN, BILL BAXTER LED THE PATROL THROUGH THE DARKNESS UNTIL THEY HAD LOCATED THE GERMAN MACHINE GUN POSTS.

THAT'S WHERE THEY ARE, ALL RIGHT. THEY'RE OUT ON A LIMB THERE, TOO...



NEXT MORNING, WHEN HE REPORTED TO THE COLONEL, THE R.S.M. SUGGESTED THAT THE KNOLL WAS SO FAR IN FRONT OF THE GERMAN FRONT LINE THAT A STRONG RAIDING PARTY COULD SEIZE IT.

YOU HAVE A GOOD POINT THERE, MISTER BAXTER. IF OUR OWN MACHINE GUNS WERE ESTABLISHED ON THAT KNOLL, WE COULD TAKE ANY GERMAN ATTACK ON THE NEW ZEALANDERS IN ENFILADE.





TWO DAYS LATER, JUST BEFORE DAWN, ALL THE  
DIVISION'S GUNS WERE TURNED ON THE KNOLL IN A  
DEVASTATING BARRAGE. THEN 'B' COMPANY,  
UNDER LIEUTENANT BAXTER, SWEEPED FORWARD...



THE MIDDLE-AGED R.S.M. WAS EASILY OUTSTRIPPED  
BY THE YOUNG SOLDIERS AS THEY STORMED THE  
KNOLL IN THE FACE OF FIERCE GERMAN FIRE.



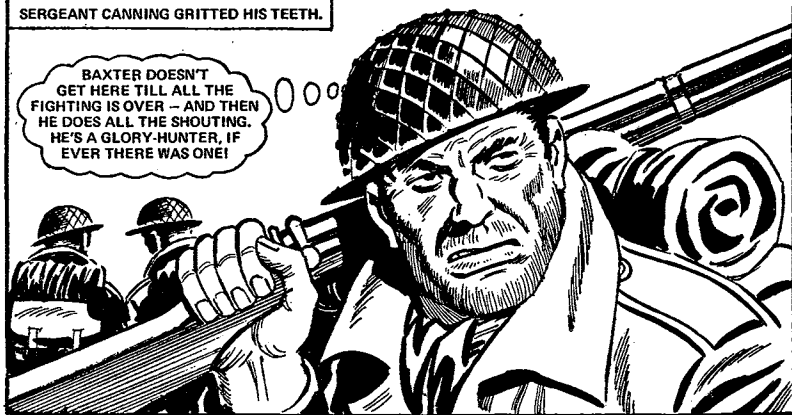
BY THE TIME BILL BAXTER ARRIVED, PANTING,  
THE OBJECTIVE HAD BEEN CAPTURED...

GOOD WORK!  
NOW WE'VE GOT TO  
GET OUR OWN MACHINE GUNS  
INTO POSITION. SNAP INTO IT,  
SERGEANT CANNING.



SERGEANT CANNING GRITTED HIS TEETH.

BAXTER DOESN'T  
GET HERE TILL ALL THE  
FIGHTING IS OVER - AND THEN  
HE DOES ALL THE SHOUTING.  
HE'S A GLORY-HUNTER, IF  
EVER THERE WAS ONE!



THAT EVENING, THE BRIGADE MACHINE GUN  
BATTALION HED SIX OF THEIR VICKERS GUNS  
ON THE BLOCK.

THE KRAUTS HAVEN'T  
WORRIED US MUCH YET, SIR –  
BUT IT'LL BE A DIFFERENT  
STORY WHEN YOUR GUNS  
OPEN UP.

WE DO TEND  
TO DRAW THEIR FIRE,  
SERGEANT-MAJOR – BUT  
WE'RE USED TO IT.

MONASTERY HILL, STUBBORNLY DEFENDED  
BY NEW ZEALANDERS, WAS THE KEY TO THE  
WHOLE CASSINO SECTOR...



IT WAS CONSTANTLY UNDER ATTACK FROM SUPERIOR  
NUMBERS OF THE ENEMY.

IN A MOMENT, THE LONE GUN WAS IN ACTION AGAIN,  
TAKING ITS TOLL OF THE DISTANT ATTACKERS.



SOON, OTHER VICKERS AND BREN  
JOINED IN THE DEADLY CHORUS...



THIS RELENTLESS HAIL OF BULLETS FROM THE FLANK  
TURNED THE TIDE OF BATTLE ON MONASTERY HILL,  
THE GERMAN ATTACK WITHERED AWAY...



THE FIELD HOSPITAL IN WHICH WALLY BAXTER WAS  
SERVICING HAD BEEN MOVED FORWARD TO THE CASSINO  
FRONT BY THIS TIME, AND INTO THE WARDS CAME A  
STREAM OF NEW ZEALAND WOUNDED.



... IF IT HADN'T  
BEEN FOR SOME ENGLISH  
MACHINE-GUNNER ON A LITTLE  
HILL ON OUR FLANK, THE KRAUTS  
WOULD HAVE DRIVEN  
US BACK.

IT WAS THEN THAT WALLY HEARD HIS  
FATHER MENTIONED BY A BIG NEW  
ZEALAND LIEUTENANT...



THEY SAY IT WAS THE  
REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR  
— A GUY NAMED BAXTER — WHO  
DID IT. HE TOOK OVER WHEN ALL  
THE GUNNERS HAD BEEN KNOCKED  
OUT OR KILLED. A HECK OF A  
BLOKE, THIS R.S.M., HE  
SAVED OUR BACON.

WALLY FELT A GLOW OF PRIDE.

WE'VE NEVER LOOKED  
AT THINGS THE SAME WAY  
— BUT HE IS MY FATHER!



THERE AND THEN, WALLY SOUGHT OUT MAJOR  
SHAW, THE COMMANDANT OF THE HOSPITAL...

THE NEXT TIME SOME  
OF OUR MEN ARE SENT UP TO  
THE FIRING LINE TO HELP EVACUATE  
THE WOUNDED, I'D LIKE TO GO,  
SIR! IT'S VERY IMPORTANT  
FOR ME.

BUT WE NEED YOU  
HERE, BAXTER. NOT MANY  
OF OUR CHAPS ARE SKILLED  
ENOUGH TO HELP IN THE SURGERY  
WARD AND OPERATING TENT.  
WHY ARE YOU SO KEEN?



THAT'S ALL I EXPLAINED...



AS YOU KNOW, SIR,  
I WAS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR,  
MUCH TO MY FATHER'S DISGUST.  
WELL, HE'S SERVING ON THIS FRONT  
NOW - AND I'D LIKE TO DO ALL I  
CAN TO PROVE I'M NOT A  
COWARD, TOO!

I CAN UNDERSTAND  
THAT, BAXTER. VERY WELL,  
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.

MEANWHILE, BILL BAXTER HAD THE  
MISFORTUNE TO OVERHEAR TWO  
OFFICERS TALKING...



OUR B.M. IS CERTAINLY  
A HIGH AN BALL OF FIRE.  
DON'T SEEM TO HAVE A  
NIVE IN HIS BODY.

THE STRANGE THING  
IS THE POOR CHAP'S SON IS A  
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR.  
DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE,  
DOES IT?

THIS WAS A BITTER BLOW TO BILL BAXTER. TWO DAYS LATER, HE REPRIMANDED CORPORAL MARSH FOR BEING SLOVENLY.

STAND TO ATTENTION WHEN I SPEAK TO YOU! HAVEN'T YOU ANY PRIDE, CORPORAL? AS A NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER, YOU SHOULD BE AN EXAMPLE TO THE MEN UNDER YOU.

NO PRIDE, HUH? AT LEAST, I'M NOT A 'PERISHIN' CONCHIE!

THE CORPORAL, A GOOD FIGHTER BUT A DIFFICULT CHARACTER, LOOKED SULLEN. AS THE R.S.M. WALKED AWAY, HE HEARD MARSH MUTTERING...

BLAZES! THE NEWS ABOUT WALTER HAS GOT AROUND TO THE WHOLE BATTALION!

BILL BAXTER WINCED...

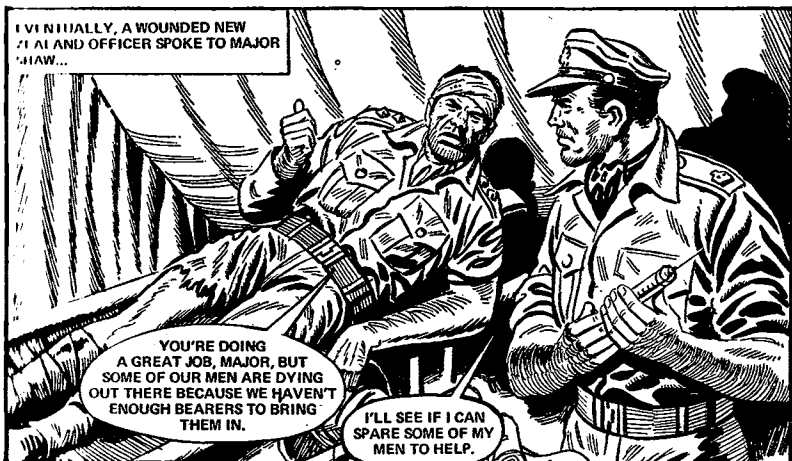


## Chapter 3. Dead Man's Ridge

THE BATTLE FOR CASSINO WAS BECOMING  
FIERCER THAN EVER AND WALLY'S FIELD  
HOSPITAL WAS MOVED CLOSER TO THE TOWN  
HILLS.



INITIALLY, A WOUNDED NEW  
SERGEANT AND OFFICER SPOKE TO MAJOR  
HAW...



THAT NIGHT, FOUR VOLUNTEERS, INCLUDING WALLY, FOLLOWED A NEW ZEALAND GUIDE UP THE MOUNTAIN SLOPE...



DAWN WAS BREAKING WHEN THEY REACHED THE NEW ZEALAND LINE ON 'DEAD MAN'S RIDGE'. THERE, THE GAUNT AND WEARY KIWIS HAD TURNED SHELL-HOLES INTO BREN-GUN PITS, WHILE RIFLEMEN SHELTERED ANYWHERE THEY COULD FIND COVER.





THE FOUR HOSPITAL ORDERLIES WENT FORWARD. FOR THE MOMENT, THE FRONT WAS QUIET.



BUT THEY HAD NOT GONE FAR BEFORE THEY CAME UNDER FIRE. A MORTAR SHELL EXPLODED CLOSE ON THEIR HEELS...



THE LAST TWO MEN WERE KILLED INSTANTLY,  
BUT WALLY AND HIS FRIEND, DUSTY, PRESSED  
ON STUBBORNLY...



THEY COULD ONLY CARRY ONE AT A TIME,  
OF COURSE — SO THEY PICKED THE MOST  
SERIOUSLY WOUNDED, FIRST GIVING HIM AN  
INJECTION TO EASE THE PAIN...



IT WAS A NIGHTMARE JOURNEY OVER THE BARREN HILLSIDE, STUMBLING AND SLIPPING ON THE RAIN-SOAKED ROCKS, AND WITH BULLETS AND SHELL-SPLINTERS FLYING AROUND THEIR BURDEN.



FOR THE NEXT FOUR NIGHTS, WALLY AND DUSTY MADE TRIP AFTER TRIP. THEN DUSTY COLLAPSED FROM SHEER EXHAUSTION, AND WALLY CARRIED ON WITH ONE OF THE NEW ZEALAND BEARERS.



AT LAST, MAJOR SHAW HIMSELF INSISTED ON WALLY HAVING A REST.



BY THIS TIME, THE NEW ZEALANDERS AND GURKHAS WERE FIGHTING IN CASSINO TOWN ITSELF AND R.S.M. BILL BAXTER'S UNIT WAS SENT UP IN SUPPORT.



BEFORE ENTERING THE LINE, THE BATTALION BIVOUACQUED LESS THAN A MILE FROM WALLY'S FIELD HOSPITAL — AND BILL BAXTER GOT PERMISSION TO WALK OVER AND SEE HIS SON.

AFTER ALL, HE IS MY SON — AND I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS NOW...



RESTING AFTER A LONG NIGHT IN THE SURGICAL WARD, WALLY WOKE UP AS SOMEONE ENTERED HIS TENT. HE BLINKED IN AMAZEMENT AS HE RECOGNISED HIS FATHER...

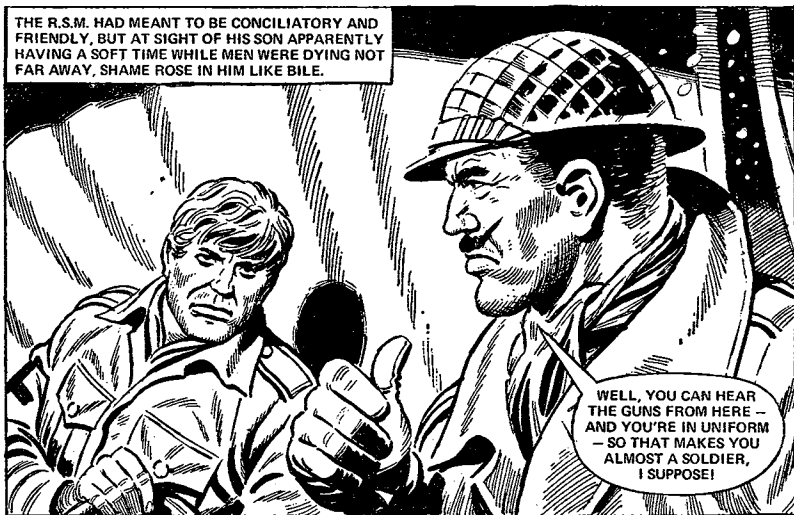
DADI!

HELLO, WALTER, YOU SEEM TO HAVE GOT YOURSELF A NICE SOFT BILLET HERE — SAFE, TOO!





THE R.S.M. HAD MEANT TO BE CONCILIATORY AND FRIENDLY, BUT AT SIGHT OF HIS SON APPARENTLY HAVING A SOFT TIME WHILE MEN WERE DYING NOT FAR AWAY, SHAME ROSE IN HIM LIKE BILE.



WALLY THREW BACK THE BLANKETS...



BILL BAXTER HESITATED. HE HAD REGRETTED THE CRUEL TAUNT ALMOST AS SOON AS HE HAD UTTERED IT, AND HE WAS ON THE POINT OF CALLING AFTER WALLY TO APOLOGISE WHEN HIS SON DISAPPEARED INTO A MARQUEE.

I — I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT!



IN WALLY, BITTERNESS WAS MINGLED WITH DESPAIR.

IT'S NO USE,  
DAD DESPISES ME STILL  
— AND HE CAN'T  
HIDE IT!



## Chapter 4. Sniper Hunt

BOTH SIDES WERE MAKING STRENUOUS EFFORTS TO BREAK THE STALEMATE AT CASSINO AND THE DAY BEFORE THE BRITISH BATTALION RELIEVED THE GURKHAS, A GERMAN SURPRISE ATTACK WAS BEING PLANNED.



NO LONG PRELIMINARY BOMBARDMENT! JUST ONE SHORT FIVE-MINUTE CURTAIN OF FIRE — THEN OUR FLAME-THROWING TANKS GO IN, FOLLOWED BY A DEITER'S PARACHUTE BATTALION!

THAT NIGHT, THE BATTALION MOVED INTO THE LINE AND ONE OF THE DEPARTING GURKHA OFFICERS WARNED THE R.S.M.



WATCH OUT FOR SNIPERS, SERGEANT-MAJOR. THEY'VE PLENTY OF COVER HERE — AND THEY'RE RED-HOT!

EARLY NEXT MORNING, THE POINT OF THE WARNING WAS DRIVEN HOME TRAGICALLY...



IN THE NEXT FOUR HOURS, TWO MORE MEN WERE KILLED. ONE OF THEM WAS SERGEANT HAY, A CLOSE BUDDY OF SERGEANT CANNING...



SERGEANT JOE CANNING WAS THE FINEST MARKSMAN IN THE WHOLE OF THE BRIGADE AND HE GOT PERMISSION FROM CAPTAIN PAGE TO GO OUT 'HUNTING' THAT NIGHT, AND TRY AND GET SOME OF THE SNIPERS AS SOON AS IT WAS LIGHT.



MUCH TO JOE CANNING'S ANNOYANCE, THE MAN WHO TURNED UP TO GO WITH HIM AS OBSERVER PROVED TO BE REGIMENTAL SERGEANT MAJOR BAXTER!



MUCH OF CASSINO WAS A NO-MAN'S LAND, STREWN WITH RUBBLE AND PITTED WITH BOMB CRATERS. THE BITTER WINTER WEATHER DID NOT IMPROVE THE SITUATION.

WE'LL MAKE FOR THE SQUARE, SERGEANT-MAJOR. MOST OF THE SNIPING SEEMS TO COME FROM THE BUILDINGS BEYOND IT.

WHATEVER YOU SAY, JOE.



THEY FOUND A GOOD HIDING-PLACE NEAR THE SQUARE, AND WHEN DAYLIGHT CAME THE R.S.M. SCANNED THE AREA IN FRONT OF THEM, BUT NOTHING MOVED.

SEE ANYTHING, SERGEANT-MAJOR?

NOT A THING! BUT YOU CAN BET YOUR LAST PENNY THEY'RE THEREABOUTS.



EVENTUALLY, THE R.S.M. DECIDED ON A DESPERATE PLAN...



FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE BILL BAXTER HAD COME TO THE BATTALION, SERGEANT JOE CANNING FELT A GRUDGING ADMIRATION FOR THE OLD SOLDIER.



UNHESITATINGLY, BILL BAXTER STOOD UP - AND WAS SPOTTED IMMEDIATELY...



JOE CANNING - AND THE SNIPER - FIRED TOGETHER...



THE SNIPER NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT HIM.





EMBOLDENED BY THE SUCCESS OF HIS PLAN, THE R.S.M. DECIDED TO GO FORWARD...



THE MOUNDS OF RUBBLE AND THE SNOW-COVERED WALLS OFFERED PLENTY OF COVER AS THE TWO MOVED CAUTIOUSLY AROUND.



THE COVER CONCEALED THE ENEMY SNIPERS, TOO, AND BILL BAXTER WAS FORCED TO TAKE A HAIR-RAISING, DESPERATE CHANCE AGAIN. BUT THIS TIME...



A GERMAN MACHINE GUN SENT A BURST OF BULLETS CRACKING AND WHISTLING CLOSE ABOVE THEIR HEADS...



BUT AS SOON AS JOE CANNING BEGAN TO DRAG THE R.S.M. INTO BETTER COVER, HE WAS HIT HIMSELF...

UGH! IT - IT'S IN THE SHOULDER NOT TOO BAD, THOUGH. I'LL HAVE TO FETCH HELP...



CANNING MANAGED TO PLUG THE WOUND ENOUGH TO STOP THE BLEEDING. THEN HE LEFT THE R.S.M. HIS WATERBOTTLE AND HEADED BACK FOR THE BATTALION LINE...



ONCE THERE, HE REPORTED TO THE COMPANY COMMANDER...



HE'S CONSCIOUS, BUT HE HASN'T A HOPE OF GETTING BACK ON HIS OWN, SIR.

I SEE. THE BEST I CAN DO IS PUSH TWO PLATOONS FORWARD AND OCCUPY THE SQUARE. THEN THE R.S.M. CAN GET PROPER ATTENTION, EVEN IF WE HAVE TO WITHDRAW AGAIN.

BUT BEFORE ANY LOCAL ADVANCE COULD BE ORGANISED, A SUDDEN AVALANCHE OF SHELLS AND MORTAR BOMBS CRASHED DOWN ON THE BATTALION LINES. THE GERMAN ATTACK HAD STARTED...



THEN THE GERMANS, ACCOMPANIED BY FLAME-THROWING TANKS, SURGED FORWARD ON BOTH SIDES OF THE HIGHWAY AGAINST THE BRITISH AND THE NEW ZEALANDERS.



ALLIED OUTPOSTS WERE DRIVEN IN, BUT THE MAIN LINE HELD. BILL BAXTER, LYING WOUNDED AND HELPLESS, COULD ONLY FOLLOW THE PROGRESS OF THE BATTLE BY THE EBB AND FLOW OF THE DIN ON EITHER SIDE OF HIM.



WOUNDED MEN WERE NOW STRUGGLING BACK INTO THE ADVANCED FIELD HOSPITAL, AND AMONGST THEM WAS SERGEANT JOE CANNING.



OVERHEARING THIS CONVERSATION, WALLY HURRIED OVER TO THE WOUNDED SERGEANT...

IS THAT R.S.M. BAXTER YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT? HE'S MY FATHER! WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM? WHERE IS HE?

HE'S BEHIND A WALL NEAR THE SQUARE. THERE'S A BIG BUILDING THAT HASN'T BEEN DAMAGED MUCH, AND IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING THERE ARE THREE BIG BOMB CRATERS RIGHT IN THE ROAD. THE WALL IS BEYOND THE LAST CRATER...

WITHOUT WAITING FOR OFFICIAL PERMISSION, WALLY TOLD ONE OF THE CORPORALS WHERE HE WAS GOING, AND THEN HEADED UP TOWARDS THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE.

I'VE GOT  
TO GO TO HIM  
— EVEN IF HE DOES  
HATE ME...



PICKING HIS WAY CAREFULLY, HE AVOIDED THE AREAS OF FIERCEST FIGHTING BUT EVERY STEP WAS FRAUGHT WITH PERIL.



THE UGLY SHAPE OF A PANZER MADE HIM  
DUCK INTO COVER THEN HE SAW IT WAS ON  
FIRE. CLOSE TO IT WERE THREE SHELL  
CRATERS...

AND THAT'S PROBABLY  
THE BIG BUILDING THE  
SERGEANT SPOKE ABOUT.  
THIS MUST BE THE  
SQUARE...



AS HE PASSED CLOSE TO THE BLAZING TANK,  
ITS AMMUNITION EXPLODED AND A SPRAY OF  
BURNING PETROL SET WALLY'S CLOTHES  
ALIGHT...





MADDENED WITH PAIN, HE FLUNG HIMSELF INTO ONE OF THE BIG, WATER-FILLED HOLES TO DOUSE THE FLAMES.



THE SHOCK OF THE ICY WATER NUMBED THE PAIN OF THE BURNS AND WHEN HE PEERED OVER THE LIP OF THE CRATER, HE SAW THE FIGURE OF A MAN LYING BEHIND THE SHELTER OF A WALL.



GATHERING HIS STRENGTH, WALLY CLIMBED OUT OF THE CRATER AND DASHED TOWARDS THE WALL.



THE SUDDEN MOVEMENT CAUGHT THE EYE OF A GERMAN SNIPER, BUT BEFORE HE COULD TAKE AIM, WALLY HAD DROPPED TO HIS KNEES BEHIND THE WALL.



THE WOUNDED R.S.M. WAS BARELY CONSCIOUS.



BILL BAXTER STIRRED AS HE HEARD HIS SON'S NAME AND FELT THE HANDS GENTLY DRESSING HIS WOUND.



AFTER HE HAD BANDAGED THE WOUND, WALLY GAVE HIS FATHER A PAIN-KILLING INJECTION, AND TRIED TO LIFT HIM TO HIS FEET...



IT WAS JUST SUCH A MOVE THE GERMAN  
SNIPER HAD ANTICIPATED...

THIS TIME I  
KILL YOU, ENGLANDER!  
JA — THE BOTH OF YOU!



BUT A GERMAN MAJOR, WHO HAD CLIMBED INTO  
THE ROOM TO OBSERVE THE BATTLE, LET OUT AN  
INDIGNANT ROAR...

DO NOT SHOOT!  
THAT IS A RED CROSS  
ORDERLY. IN THE PARACHUTE  
REGIMENT, WE DO NOT SHOOT  
SUCH MEN — NOR THE  
WOUNDED!



ABASHED, THE SNIPER LOWERED HIS RIFLE, AND THE MAJOR CAME TO THE WINDOW AND SHOUTED AT WALLY IN GUTTURAL ENGLISH.

ENGLANDER—  
DO NOT DRAG HIM!  
CARRY HIM! WE WILL  
NOT SHOOT!



ONLY A MAN OF EXCEPTIONAL STRENGTH COULD HAVE LIFTED THE R.S.M., BUT WALLY MANAGED IT AND WENT STAGGERING OFF WITH HIS FATHER ACROSS HIS SHOULDERS.



BUT MORTAR SHELLS WERE STILL FALLING THICK AND FAST ALTHOUGH THE GERMAN ATTACK HAD LOST ITS MOMENTUM. WALLY NEARLY WENT DOWN AS A SPLINTER OF STEEL RIPPED HIS THIGH.



HELP WAS AT HAND, HOWEVER - AND THE R.S.M. WAS TRANSFERRED TO A STRETCHER...





BILL BAXTER TURNED TO HIS SON, HIS CRAGGY FACE LIT UP IN A PROUD SMILE.

WALTER, SEEMS  
I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN  
MORE WRONG ABOUT YOU.  
YOU'RE AS GOOD A BAXTER  
AS ANY OF THEM!



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